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ABSTRACT

If educational administration preparation programs are to become more effective, basic premises need changing. Behavioral and social science knowledge must be deliberately included in the design, structure, and utilization of training programs drawing on the theoretical and empirical literature of socialization of adults in complex organizations. The periods of pre-entry socialization, early on-the-job-socialization, and formal setting socialization should not be neglected. Wheeler's theoretical model of socialization interaction could facilitate effective training programs. The autonomy norms of university professors and the organizational structure of universities are problems retarding the incorporation of socialization knowledge into program designs, but those responsible for preparing educational administrators need to know that behavioral and social sciences can provide systematic guidance relative to program design and operation, and are means for increasing capability to train more competent educational administrators. (Author/DW)

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ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AND THE PREPARATION OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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There is increasing clamor regarding the ability of professional preparation programs to train competent practitioners. Programs claiming to improve the effectiveness of educational administrators are as vulnerable, perhaps more, as those designing to train doctors, clergy, lawyers, nurses, teachers, and others whose "license to practice" is linked, directly or indirectly, to a period of formal preparation for the role.

While the question of the relation between knowledge and practice is not a new one, it poses a particularly vexing problem for those concerned with the preparation and training of competent professional practitioners. In this arena, as perhaps in no other, the clarity of the relation between theory and practice is crucial — and yet the relation is frequently clouded. Preparation programs for educational administrators are frequently criticized for their failure to adequately relate theory (espoused by faculty in university settings) to practice (theory-in-use guiding administrator behavior in the field).[1] The recent

[1] Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness, Jossey-Boss Publishers, 1974.

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excitement surrounding the emergence of competency/performance-based administrator preparation programs reflects this observation that current training programs are not adequately preparing effective educational administrators.

A major concern addressed in this paper is that such changes in the focus and the locus of preparation will not result in the expected increase in competency among educational administrators. Indeed, as Bridges and Baehr (1971) indicate, most studies of educational administration show little relationship between the amount of formal training and subsequent job effectiveness of administrator practitioners, as perceived by superiors and subordinates. The reasoning underlying the discussion to follow is that the current basis for the design and operation of preparation programs is inadequate to the task of producing competent administrators.

It is proposed that (1) historical trends in preparation programs represent peripheral changes that have not produced any fundamental shifts in the knowledge and value premises underlying the structure of training programs themselves; (2) systemic change in the basis upon which programs are designed and operated will be necessary if desired increases in program effectiveness are to be realized; and (3) incorporating empirical and theoretical knowledge from the behavioral and social sciences in the structure and operation of such programs offers one means of substantially increasing their capability for training more competent educational administrators.

TRENDS IN PREPARATION PROGRAMS

While there has been no systematic mechanism for the monitoring of preparation programs (Silver, 1974), a 1973 study by the University Council for Educational Administration identified ten historical trends emerging over the last decade. Briefly, preparation programs are increasingly characterized by their tendency to:

1) State their purpose in more operational terms;
2) Incorporate ideas and research findings from the social and behavioral sciences;
3) Train educational and other administrators in common programs;
4) Recognize the saliency of ideas from the humanities;
5) Reflect more specialized and more discipline-based knowledge and skill;
6) Become more flexible;
7) Define program structure more clearly;
8) Increase the heterogeneity of students recruited;
9) Increase the variety of instructional approaches used; and
10) Increase the quantity and variety of field experiences.

There are three emergent trends noted in a 1974 report by Silver:

1) Increasing field orientation;
2) Increasing attention to competency/performance-based programming; and
3) Increasing integration with other departments.

These three emergent trends and the ten historical trends in preparation programs reflect what is termed first-order change. Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) define a first-order change as "one that occurs within a given system which itself remains unchanged...." This is distinguished from second-order change which these authors defined as "one whose occurrance changes the system itself."

There is little argument regarding the positive contribution of the many first-order changes reflected in the historical trends

characterizing preparation programs. However, the level on which these changes occured have not effected any fundamental realignment or alteration of the fact and value premises upon which these training programs are designed and operated; content and delivery-mechanisms changed somewhat, but the basic program structure remained about the same. The emergent trends toward an increasing field orientation and an increasing attention to competency/performance-based programming are of a similar nature. They also represent first-order change in which the basic system remains essentially unchanged —— the location, the criteria, and perhaps even the trainers themselves may be altered, but the overall system upon which the training program itself is designed and operated remains the same. One can predict, with some degree of certainty, that first-order change of this nature is not any more likely to produce more competent administrators than previous changes of the first order.

EFFECTIVE PREPARATION PROGRAMS: THE NECESSITY OF SECOND-ORDER CHANGE

If preparation programs for educational administrators are to become more effective, the basic premises upon which these programs have been built must be changed. The second-order change proposed here is to move from mere inclusion of behavioral and social science knowledge as part of program content to the deliberate utilization of that same knowledge in the design, structure, and operation of these programs. Thus, in addition to the current incorporation of such knowledge into program content, much of the same knowledge would be used as the basis for decisions concerning the selection and

processing of students, as well as for decisions about program structure and its relation to program purpose. The theoretical and empirical literature concerning the socialization of adults in complex organizations is rich in knowledge relating directly to the design and operation of professional preparation programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AND PROGRAM REDESIGN

Preparation programs for educational administrators have systematically ignored three crucial periods in the development of administrator practitioners. The first of these concerns informal learning occuring in the period immediately prior to entry into a formal preparation program. The second neglected area is the learning and personal adjustment which occurs during the period following formal preparation and credentialling of successful candidates —— the first several years on the job as an administrator. A third period of neglect concerns the prospective administrator's experiences in the formal training program itself. While socialization phenomena occuring during mid and late stages (Bridges, 1965 and Schein, 1974) of the administrator's career cycle are also important areas of concern, they will not be discussed here.

Pre-entry Socialization

The idea that prior experience has some effect on later learning is not new. Brim, among others, suggests a powerful notion—— that personality development is in part a result of new-role learning by individuals (1960).

Recent research by Blood (1966) and Greenfield (1973) suggest quite strongly that the quality and variety of experience during the teaching years conditions the nature of the work-world orientation held as an administrator. While there has long been an assumed (but not validated) relation between number of years as a teacher and qualification for administrative certification, Blood's and Greenfield's findings indicate that it is not the length but rather the quality of the experience during those years that counts — more specifically, what does the teacher learn during these years as an organizational member.

The evidence indicates that a period of anticipatory socialization (Merton, 1968) occurs prior to or parallel with the formal administrative preparation program. A function of qualitative differences in the nature of the administrative candidate's experience during this period is that candidates acquire different degrees of knowledge and familiarity regarding the norms, values, practices and general work-world orientations of the administrative group. Yet, most formal preparation programs are designed and operated as if none of this informal learning occured.

Another factor warranting consideration is the special long-term serial character of the socialization experiences of teachers and administrators. Educators are probably unique in their long-term exposure to the roles they'll eventually assume as adults (Blood, 1966). If preparation programs are to train more effective administrator practitioners, then it seems of paramount importance that they be designed and operated in a manner that reflects awareness of these and other pre-entry role-learning phenomena.

Early On-The-Job Socialization

A recent study by Mascaro (1973) indicates that the early on-the-job socialization into the principalship presents a problematic situation for the new role occupant. While the specific nature of the problematic situation may vary according to individual differences accruing from earlier learning about the role-demands of the principalship, it seems evident that adjustments will be made or attempted by the new administrator in an effort to reduce the discrepancy between actual demands of the situation and the initial conceptions held by the incumbent for the role. It would appear advantageous, if a major purpose of preparation programs is to provide prospective educational administrators with some realistic conception of the role demands on administrators, to build into the curricula of formal training programs some learning and practice opportunities that would at least "tip-off" the prospective administrator that some role adjustments may be necessary. It is reasonable to assume that the early on-the-job socialization period might thereby be facilitated.

Although Mascaro's study was limited to the elementary principalship, it seems reasonable to speculate that parallel phenomena may well follow initial entry into any new role. For example, Lortie's (1959) study of lawyers is indicative that some amount of personal adjustment was necessitated among first year lawyers in their dealing with the problematic situation of "running a practice" (having to set up an office, service clients, and the like.) The case of medicine (Becker & Geer, 1958) offers another

example of the necessity to make adjustments to unanticipated problematic situations confronting new role occupants. Recent research by Buchanan (1974) documents other "adjustment" phenomena concerning the socialization of managers in work organizations.

As the foregoing suggests, much is likely to occur after formal preparation, during the early on-the-job socialization of the new role incumbent. It appears reasonable that the first year experiences of newly appointed educational administrators could deliberately be enhanced to the extent that they were prepared to deal with, and have some knowledge about, the problematic situations likely to be encountered on the first, and perhaps succeeding jobs. These problems will vary according to (1) differences in the earlier anticipatory socialization experiences of incumbents and (2) differences in the nature of the newly acquired role. Again, further study and testing of these and related phenomena would seem to offer high promise in terms of providing those responsible for the formal preparation of educational administrators with salient data about the nature of problems likely to be encountered during the first year on the job.

Socialization in Formal Settings

There is much that is known about the socialization of adults in the context of complex organizational settings. However, the design and execution of existing preparation programs for educational administrators does not appear to reflect what is known about these socialization processes in general, nor do they reflect what is

known about specific socialization phenomena relating directly to formal and informal learning among educational administrators. The social science literature abounds with theoretical constructs as well as empirical data which would be instructive to the designers of such formal preparation programs.

A theoretical model which could facilitate the development of more effective training programs is the paradigm developed by Wheeler in which he posits that socialization outcomes are in part a function of the interaction of six dimensions, three at the organizational level and three at the individual level (1967). Wheeler speculates that the most favorable outcomes would occur

> ... in settings where the typical recruit is motivated and capable of learning both the norms and the required performances, and where the setting itself presents a clear normative structure, offers many opportunities for performance, and has the power of selective reward (p. 112).

The six intervening mechanisms of Wheeler's framework and three resultant socialization outcomes (Brim,(1967) are pictured below in Figure 1.

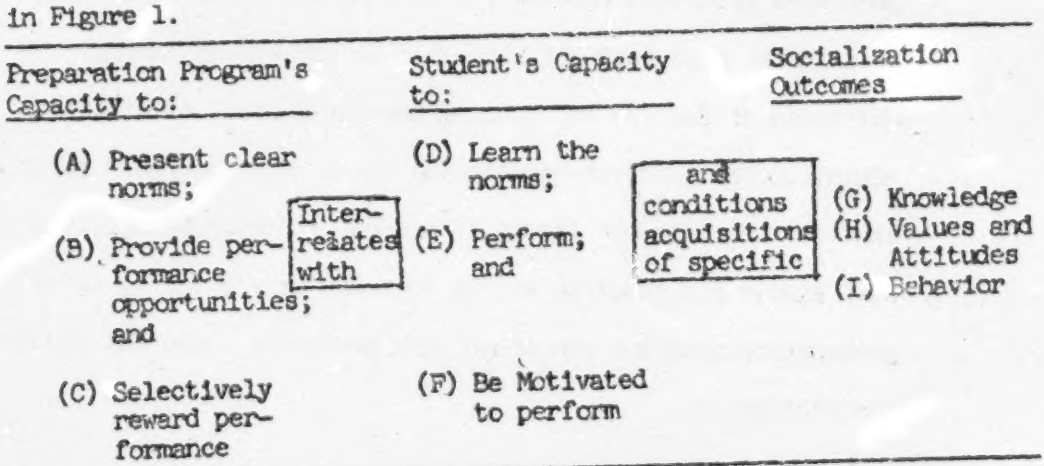

Figure 1: Socialization Phenomena Related to Formal Preparation Programs (Adapted from Stanton Wheeler (1967) "Framework for the Analysis of Socialization in Organizations")

Most administrator preparation programs emphasize the knowledge dimension, although some are now beginning to move toward emphasis of observable behavioral phenomena. In any case, the potential of a framework such as Wheeler's to the deliberate design, evaluation, and refinement of formal preparation programs seems promising.

The usefulness of Wheeler's model, and of many other socialization constructs not reflected in the foregoing illustration, is that they serve to focus attention on variables which (1) can usually be manipulated or controlled by the socializing agent, and (2) can have a discernable effect on socialization outcomes. A second major advantage accruing to these and other socialization constructs is that they offer a coherent theoretical basis for developing and evaluating both formal and informal learning occuring throughout the career cycle of the educational administrator—especially the pre-entry period of informal learning, the formal graduate training program itself, and the post-program socialization phenomena affecting the newly appointed administrator. Frameworks used in the past have not been able to adequately incorporate the multitude of factors influencing the development of effective administrator practitioners in the field of education. While socialization theory is not likely to account for everything, it does seem both simple and complete enough to serve as a guide to agents of preparation programs concerned with producing competent educational administrators.

SUMMARY

Change on the order of what has been suggested will be difficult at best. There are many obstacles in the way of such a fundamental re-construction of the premises upon which preparation programs currently rest. Perhaps the most difficult dilemma confronting those attempting such change is that the programmatic alterations necessitated by incorporation of socialization knowledge into program design and operation run counter to the autonomy norm of individual university professors. A second difficulty lies in the organizational structure of the university — most are not arranged to accommodate such organized and coordinated activity. When such activities do occur they usually take the form of a "center" or an "institute" lying outside the formal departmental structure; hence, internal change is obviated to a large extent. A third constraint is related to the nature of the reward-structure within the university — most systems tend to reward scholarship related to knowledge production and dissemination activities rather than those focusing upon the actual design and operation of formal training programs.

Operationalizing the proposed systemic (second-order) changes will be problematic. One can be fairly certain, however, that peripheral (first-order) changes which merely shift the locus (from University to field) or redirect the focus (from knowledge to behavior) of preparation programs will be unlikely to effect

fundamental improvement relative to producing effective educational administrators. If the premises underlying administrator training programs do not change, formal training will continue to bear little relation to effectiveness on the job.

Those responsible for the preparation of educational administrators need to be aware that our knowledge base in the behavioral and social sciences is now firm enough to provide systematic guideance relative to program design and operation. Incorporating empirical and theoretical knowledge about organizational socialization in the structure and operation of such programs offers one means of substantially increasing their capability for training more competent educational administrators.

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